

The Roundtable

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An IED killed their son. Then this happened.

Their grief was palpable in today's meeting. Paul and Deanna House described the day in 2007 when two military representatives arrived at their home to tell them that their son, Joel, died two days prior when a roadside bomb killed him and three other soldiers in Iraq. It was Ms. House's birthday.

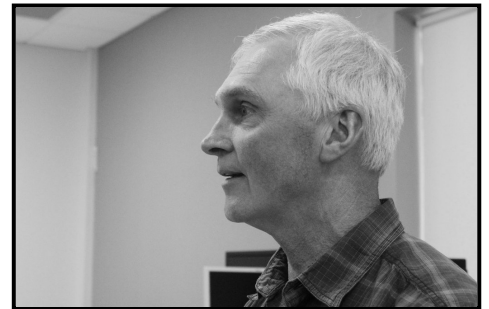
Over 1100 people attended the memorial service at Lee Academy. Mr. House said nineteen men from Lee had been killed, creating a major impact on a community that has just 800 residents. Another memorial service was held in Texas where the idea for House in the Woods was born. House in the Woods offers outdoor retreats for active duty military, veterans, and their family members, in the wilderness of Maine. Activities include hunting, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, nature tours, campfires, swimming, and wildlife identification and spotting. It is here where veterans confront – and help overcome - their physical and mental disabilities.

"This is a healing place," Mr. House said. "Veterans open up and tell of their experiences overseas. There are twenty-two suicides committed by active duty or veterans every day. Veterans from 25 different states come to House in the Woods. Fitting back into the civilian world doesn't work with only a "get over it" told to them.

Mr. House told of a double amputee, whose legs and some fingers were gone, who was on a bear hunt with him. They arrived at the tree stand, and the veteran pulled himself up while another person provided support from below. "I started to live again," the veteran said.

"Families suffer drastically," Mr. House continued. "It is always there." The divorce rate for families is high whose members are in combat zones. There are 160,000 vets in Maine and millions nationwide.

"Losing a child takes it right out of you," Mr. House said. "Our faith kept us together."



“I was bitter at the time,” Ms. House said. “I had low energy. It took nine years to recover.”

Mr. House said information about the retreats is spread mostly by word-of-mouth. However, an informative website (houseinthewoods.org) gives details on what they offer and the requirements to participant in the programs. Mr. House announced proudly that they recently received 501©3 non-profit status that will help with fundraising. There is no charge for veterans and their families.



House in the Woods welcomes volunteers. The schedule for training sessions and a calendar of events can be seen at houseinthewoods.org. Their Facebook page offers even more information about programs, volunteering and upcoming events.

“Shame on us for complaining about the day,” Mr. House said, as he told the story of an amputee who came upon a young woman who was in tears. Asking the woman what was wrong, she said that her cell phone was broken.

Joel House loved to hunt and fish. From an idea borne from a memorial service in Texas came this healing place in Lee. And as for Joel’s service, “he did it with honor and courage,” said his father.

After the Bell Rang

Marc Scott and **Jodi McCarthy** attended today, giving **Paul Miragliuolo** a chance to fine Marc for a birthday long past. Perhaps we should have left it there, given that the “chorus” of members who sang the birthday song achieved inharmonious wails and wobbles.

Interact club members Sydney and Colin attended. **Ken Huhn** reviewed the club’s banner redesign contest. **Karen Schaller** has details. **Ken Kimball** told of a bike marathon last weekend, and **Tyler Hoxie** is happy that his fiancée graduated and has a job lined up at EMMC.

President June Kontio is happy to have her oldest and youngest children getting together. Unfortunately for her, they are meeting in Australia. **Paul Miragliuolo** is not going to Australia, but he announced that he would be on vacation for the next three weeks.

Les Myers- May 23, 2019



Caroline King, Deanna House in an information exchange